

Worship to Overcome Poverty

Spotlight: United Nations World Summit, September 14-16

A Worship Kit to Educate and Empower Faith
Communities to Build a Prophetic Voice to Address
the Crisis of Global Poverty

Sojourners
August 2005

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Introduction

August, 2005

Friends,

2005 represents a pivotal year in the fight against global poverty. First, people of faith across the country mobilized around the July G8 Summit, calling on leaders representing the eight wealthiest nations to achieve a bold breakthrough on global poverty. In September 14-16 the United Nations General Assembly will open its first session of the year with a review of progress in achieving the “Millennium Development Goals” – a set of 8 goals agreed to in 2000 to cut extreme poverty in our world in half by 2015. Already the world has missed achieving the first target regarding access to education. At the current pace sub-Saharan Africa won't cut extreme poverty in half until the year 2050.

Statistics paint a portrait of the world in which we live. The staggering reality that 30,000 children die every day of poverty-related causes can either paralyze us or ignites our moral outrage. Behind these deaths are countless grieving mothers and fathers, families that lose hope for the future. In an increasingly interdependent world the body of Christ extends far beyond the borders of the United States. When one member suffers all members suffer and when one member is honored, all members are honored. Through this worship kit we seek to honor the lives of our brothers and sisters living in extreme poverty across the world. Through lifting up our prayers we can ask God to intervene in the lives of those in need and use our voices to address the root causes of extreme poverty.

We pray that this kit will serve as a catalyst for further educating and engaging your congregation in the life-saving work of building God's kingdom. Use it during an upcoming worship service to shine light on God's call to stand up for economic justice and speak prophetically to urge the leaders of the world to make real commitments during this United Nations “World Summit” that we might use our combined resources and knowledge to overcome poverty in our world.

In addition to using this resource for your congregation, please visit www.sojo.net to learn more ways that you can strengthen our collective voices to make these Millennium Development Goals a reality.

With God's love, we know all things are possible.

Peace,
The Sojourners Organizing Team

Call to Worship

God looked into emptiness and created all that is.
God spread out the earth in its diversity with
mountains and valleys, rivers and fertile plains.
There were patches of flood and fire, of dryness and of vivid green,
embraced by wind and sea a
sun-filled landscape of hospitality.
And, threading through it all, like weavings of golden hope,
were dreams of justice and compassion and gentle streams of peace.
God gathered all peoples into community, gave a sigh of joy
and set us free to choose our path in a daring adventure of trust.

This is our God.

This is the wonder of our calling in faith.

Let us worship God.

*Adapted from the Global Week of Action
for Trade Justice worship materials
www.april2005.org*

Prayer of Confession

Watchful God, we confess there is so much we do not know about the economy of food – how it is grown, who harvests it, who transports it, or how it is distributed. We eat what we are served. We select from the shelves at the store. An enormous system has developed around what was once a simple act. You grew the food you ate. You bartered for the food you ate. You knew the cost. Help us to recognize the hidden costs of our food. We want to see injustice clearly, the way Jesus did. We want to be awakened from our apathy and enraged by injustice, as Jesus was. Through Your grace we will learn, act, reflect, and change. God be with us. Amen.

*From the National Council of Churches
www.councilofchurches.org*

Confessional Litany

Reader 1: "Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not take notice?"

"Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers." (Isaiah 58:3, NRSV)

Reader 2: Lord, we are experts in serving our own interests. We know how to make sure we do all right. We have helped set up and keep going a whole world trading system to serve us. No wonder our worship rings hollow in your ears.

Silence

Lord, we're sorry for all our selfishness and greed. Give us the will to change ourselves. And help us to start changing the world.

Reader 1: Lord of all the world,

All: Listen to our prayer this day.

Reader 1: "Is this not the fast that I choose? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?" (Isaiah 58:6-7, NRSV)

Reader 2: Lord, too many of your people are hungry and homeless. Too many live in dire poverty. Too many die before they should. And in the rich countries of the world, we have done too little to change this. In fact, our governments have been leaders in forcing poor countries into free trade, making things worse rather than better.

Silence

Lord, make our campaigning more effective. Challenge the hearts of those in positions of power. Change the policies that keep people poor. And give food to the hungry and hope to the despairing.

Reader 1: Lord of all the world,

All: Listen to our prayer this day.

Reader 1: "If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom shall be like the noonday." (Isaiah 58:10 NRSV)

Reader 2: Lord, this year you have given us an opportunity and a challenge. This year could be the beginning of the end of poverty. Yet there is so much to do to make it happen.

Silence

Lord, we want to make poverty history. Give us the courage to speak to our friends and neighbors. Give us the resolve to advocate on behalf of the poor. And take our efforts and multiply them into change.

Reader 1: Lord of all the world,

All: Listen to our prayer this day.

*Adapted from Christian Aid
www.christianaid.co.uk*

Suggested Scripture Passages

Amos 8: 4-7
Isaiah 58: 3-9
Isaiah 65: 17-25
Matthew 5: 13-16
Matthew 25: 31-44
Mark 10: 17-31
Luke 4: 16-21

Suggested Hymns

- Opening Hymn: **Uyai Mose (Come, All You People)**
Can be found in *Sing! A New Creation, With One Voice*, and *Come All You People*, from the Iona Community.
GIA Publications, 1.800.442.1358
- Hymn of the Day: **What Does the Lord Require**
Can be found in the *United Methodist Hymnal* and *Rejoice in the Lord*.
Hope Publishing Company, 1.800.323.1049
- Scripture Hymn: **In An Age of Twisted Values** or **When a Prophet Sings of Justice**
Both can be found in *Sing! A New Creation*.
Selah Publishing, 1.800.852.6172
- Intercessory Hymn: **For the Healing of the Nations**
Can be found in the *United Methodist Hymnal*
Hope Publishing Company, 1.800.323.1049
- O Lord, Hear my Prayer**
Can be found in *Sing! A New Creation* and *Songs and Prayers from Taizé*.
GIA Publications, 1.800.442.1358
- Sending Hymn: **Will You Come and Follow Me** or **Thuma Mina (Send Me, Lord)**
Both can be found in *Sing! A New Creation*.
Selah Publishing, 1.800.852.6172

Prayers of Intercession

Jesus said, "blessed are the poor in spirit." We pray for the children, women, and men across the world who struggle each day to survive, pitted against economic conditions beyond their control. Give them strength to meet each day and hope for a different future.

Jesus said, "blessed are the peacemakers." We pray for the people and groups of people campaigning for change to harmful economic policies. May the call for just trade, an end to debt, and more and better aid echo across the world.

Jesus said, "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." We pray for the leaders and politicians with the power to change things. We pray especially for the decisionmakers at the United Nations as they struggle with the question of poverty. Help them to take the side of the poor, to resist the voices of self-interest and complacency, and to make bold choices for the good of all people.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and friend of the poor.

Amen.

Adapted from Christian Aid
www.christianaid.co.uk

We pray for the Church, that we may demonstrate to the world a living, vibrant faith, which seeks to include and share, and speaks out against the scandal of poverty. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for world leaders, that they may listen to the voices of those who live in poverty, and begin to use their power generously for the good of all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for ourselves, that through our choices, actions and words we may live out our faith in our everyday lives, growing more compassionate and generous each day. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the work of [your organization here] around the world, that we may improve the quality of life of the many, and together seek the common good. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

From CAFOD
www.cafod.org.uk

We bring you, O Lord, the troubles and perils of people and nations:
the sighing of prisoners and captives,
the sorrows of the bereaved,
the necessities of strangers,
the helplessness of the weak,
the despondency of the weary,
the failing powers of the aged.
O Lord, draw near to each,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

St Anselm (1033-1109)
From Christian Aid
www.christianaid.org.uk

Eucharistic Prayer

A congregational refrain, using Psalm 89: 14, is included as an option within the prayer.

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right to give unceasing thanks and boundless praise to you, Holy God, ruler of the universe and giver of life. You brought the world into being and declared it good; you made humankind in your image, and entrusted to us the stewardship of all creation.

Despite our failings you showed us mercy. Through your law and the voices of prophets and poets, you called us to faithfulness and justice. You commanded us to remember the poor and the needy, the orphan and the stranger. With infinite generosity you forgave us as we followed selfish goals and ignored your words of love. Never abandoning us to our sinfulness, you came among us and showed us the path of life.

Therefore we praise you, joining the saints and angels in proclaiming your glory, as we say,

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and honor and praise to you, holy and living God. Your word of peace has been active from the beginning; your justice has sought incarnation in every age. In the fullness of time you looked with favor upon Mary, your willing servant, that she might conceive your Son through the power of your Holy Spirit. Expecting his birth she sang of your purpose: The mighty shall be cast down and the humble lifted up; the promise of mercy to Abraham and all his children shall be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

[Glory to you, holy and living God. Righteousness and justice are the foundations of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.]

Living among us, Jesus loved us. He broke bread with outcasts and sinners, healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor. He pronounced the blessedness of peacemakers, all those who are willing to seek first your Kingdom and your righteousness. Jesus yearned to draw all the world to himself, yet we were heedless of his call to walk in love. We returned violence for his friendship, crucifixion for his self-offering. Yet even this you turned to blessing, and transformed his unjust death into the means of salvation.

[Glory to you, holy and living God. Righteousness and justice are the foundations of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.]

On the night before he died for us, our Savior Jesus Christ took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his friends, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Celebrant and People:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

The Celebrant then continues:

Accept, O Lord, our sacrifice of praise, this memorial of our redemption.

Send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts. Let them be for us the Body and Blood of your Son. Send your Spirit upon us also, and grant that we who eat this bread and drink this cup may be filled with your life and goodness. Through the abiding presence of Christ, empower us to live the gospel of peace and bring reconciliation to the world in his Name.

[Glory to you, holy and living God. Righteousness and justice are the foundations of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.]

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever.

AMEN.

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say/we now pray:

Our Father and Mother...

*From the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
www.elca.org*

Litany – Remembering God’s Provision for Us

A: O God, our Provider, you created us and fed us. (Genesis 1:26-31)

B: You called us out of slavery into a land of milk and honey,

A: And fed us in the desert on the long journey into that abundance. (Exodus 16:1-36)

B: You established your covenant with us that we might receive the bounty of your blessings as we dwell in harmony and justice.

A: “Obey all the Lord’s laws and commands and you will have all you want to eat and will live in safety.” (Leviticus 25:18-19)

B: In your wisdom, you arranged periodic corrections of our tendency toward accumulation and injustice.

A: “Every third year, set aside a tithe of food for the Levites, who have no inheritance, the aliens, orphans, and widows, that they may eat within your towns and be filled.” (Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and 26:12-13)

B: “Every seventh year, cancel the debts of those who owe you money.” (Deuteronomy 15:1-6)

A: “The fiftieth year shall be a Year of Restoration, a Year of Jubilee, when slaves will be returned to their families, debts forgiven, property restored to original owners, and freedom proclaimed to all inhabitants of the land.” (Leviticus 25:8-10)

B: In your special caring for the marginal ones, you established a safety net to provide for those falling through the cracks.

A: “When you harvest, leave some for aliens, orphans, widows.” (Deuteronomy 24:19-22 and Leviticus 19:9-10)

B: “When a countryman becomes poor, be generous to him. The poor will be with you always, so be generous to them.” (Deuteronomy 15:7-11)

A: When we lost sight of your justice, thereby rendering our worship empty, your prophets spoke out to correct us.

B: “Is not this the fast I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke,

A: “to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?”

B: “Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,

A: “and bring the homeless poor into your house?” (Isaiah 58:6-7)

B: Your son began his public ministry proclaiming the Year of Jubilee, the freeing of the oppressed and good news to the poor. (Luke 4:18-19)

A: He cared for the hungry in feeding the multitudes. (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, and John 6:1-14)

B: And was willing even to violate the law so that his disciples would have food to eat. (Matthew 12:1-8)

All join: Make us aware, O God, of our responsibility to carry out your will in provision for those in need. Amen.

*From the National Council of Churches
www.councilofchurches.org
(Taken from “Moving Beyond Band-Aids”
by the California Council of Churches)*

Commitment and Commissioning

All:

We dare to pray: Lord, let the world be changed,

For we long to see the end of poverty.

We dare to pray: Lord, let the rules be changed,

For we long to bring trade justice to the poor.

We dare to pray: Lord, let my life be changed,

For we long to bring hope where good news is needed.

In the strength of your Spirit
And inspired by your compassion,
We make this promise to work for change,

And wait confidently for the day
When you make all things new.

Celebrant:

Go forth into this world to act for justice.

Go in faith and courage as the children of God.

All:

We will go in faith.

Celebrant:

And may God the Creator plant seeds of new community,
Christ Jesus spread the feast of plenty before us all,
And the Holy Spirit surround the world with songs of justice.

Amen.

2005: The UN's International Year for Microcredit

For almost 25 years, microcredit has demonstrated its ability to enable millions of the world's poor to escape poverty. Small loans for jobs and income-generating projects have increased available money for nutrition, education, health care and housing. Poor people and communities with access to credit often for the first time are taking control by participating in their local economies and strengthening their self-esteem.

2005 is the UN's International Year for Microcredit. In addition to fighting for just economic policies, Sojourners encourages people of faith to invest in the poor by investing in microcredit.

Oikocredit, a faith-based microcredit organization founded in 1975 by the World Council of Churches, is the largest international private provider of microcredit in the world. With small loans from churches and individuals in the United States, Oikocredit US supplies loans to microcredit banks, cooperatives and Fair Trade associations around the world. In turn, these organizations supply small loans to entrepreneurs in poor countries.

Microcredit is a reliable investment that gives the poor a true chance. To find out more about investing in people, send an email to usa.sa@oikocredit.org.

*Adapted from the Global Week of Action
for Trade Justice worship materials
www.april2005.org*

A Franciscan Benediction

May God bless you with discomfort
at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships,
so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger
at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy. And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

*From Tearfund
www.tearfund.org*

Other Resources

- >> Church Action on Poverty's *Poverty Action Sunday*: Reflections, ideas, and worship resources for Christians concerned about poverty (<http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/PDF/Worship%20Resources.pdf>)
- >> *Our daily bread*: A non-Eucharistic liturgy from CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) on food and hunger, encouraging us to see the world from the eyes of the hungry (http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources/worship/liturgies_and_services/parish_liturgies/our_daily_bread)
- >> *Make Poverty History* vigil: An order of worship from CAFOD designed for the Make Poverty History Campaign (http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources/worship/liturgies_and_services/parish_liturgies/mph_vigil)
- >> *Vigil on debt - The time is now*: A vigil from CAFOD, centered on the Lord's Prayer and focused on debt justice. (<http://www.cafod.org.uk/var/storage/original/application/php6ji3nX.pdf>)
- >> *Season of Prayer and Advocacy* Resource from Micah Challenge: Resources to influence the Millennium +5 Summit at the United Nations in September (http://micahchallenge.org/Advocacy_Resources/275.asp)
- >> *Friday Prayers* from Micah Challenge: a collection of spiritual resources for those involved in campaigning to overcome poverty (http://micahchallenge.org/Prayer_Resources/136.asp)

Next Steps and Partner Organizations

For details about activities related to the U.N. World Summit, September 14-16, and how to get involved, please see:

- >> Sojourners: www.sojo.net
- >> Bread for the World: www.bread.org
- >> The Millennium Campaign: www.millenniumcampaign.org
- >> World Vision: www.worldvision.org
- >> Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation: www.episcopalglobalreconciliation.org
- >> Tearfund: www.tearfund.org